

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method of determining communication link quality includes the steps of: providing communications stations (e.g., UHF communications satellites, base stations of a terrestrial cellular network) with beacon transmitters that are used to transmit two types of signals from each communications station; and providing a communications device that employs the communications stations with beacon receivers and the ability to process the two types of signals to provide a user of the communications device with a real time determination of link impairments and, from this, a determination of the type and quality of service that is available to the user. The first type of signal is a stable continuous wave (CW) tone that provides a reference signal level, and the second type of signal is a coded waveform with distinguishable correlation properties. In an exemplary preferred embodiment, a processor and display are integrated with the user's communication device and function to process these two signals and provide a user-friendly interface through which information pertaining to determined levels of link impairments and the type and quality of service available at that given location and time is communicated to the user. In an exemplary preferred embodiment, the user's communication device is also provided with a booster system with an alternative high-gain antenna to increase communications opportunities in difficult operating environments.